

The Atlanta Journal- Constitution

By Aaron Gould Sheinin
Thursday, February 19, 2009

U.S. Rep. Sanford Bishop (D-Ga.) said Thursday morning that the \$787 million economic stimulus plan was written to ensure Republicans in the states did not hijack or block the money from serving its intended targets.

Speaking to a legislative breakfast of Voices for Georgia's Children, Sanford — who serves on the House Appropriations Committee — said the more than \$10 billion in K-12 money for Title 1 schools is a good example.

"You won't believe the fight we had with the other side of the aisle on how the funds will be distributed," Bishop said. "Title 1, that was suggested as the guideline as the criteria for targeting many of the resources in the stimulus package so we wouldn't have to trust state governments and governors to distribute those funds — make sure we had formulas in place that would ensure the funds got places where they are needed most."

Georgia is set to receive more than \$400 million for Title 1 schools, money that will go directly to local school districts. While much of the nearly \$6 billion in overall stimulus money will flow through either Gov. Sonny Perdue's office or state agencies, such as the Department of Transportation, some will be awarded through federal agencies directly to county or local governments.

That was intentional, Bishop said.

"There was a great deal of trepidation" among Democrats in Congress, he said. "Twenty-seven governors are Democrats. The remainder are Republican. Of course, some of us who are in states where the governor (like Perdue) is of the other party were concerned that there were governors who were not in favor of the stimulus plan, who said they did not want the money. Of course, our concern was how to do we make sure the people who need these resources can access the money."

Perdue has been critical of the plan, but has not said he would not accept the money it sends. Earlier this week he named a point person to coordinate the state's efforts to navigate the often complicated funding plan.

Still, Bishop said he's hopeful the stimulus package will have wide impacts.

"The bill is not perfect," he said. "But it will extend a helping hand to those who are hurt by the recession, while, hopefully, it will lay the foundation for the preservation and creation of new jobs."

Any trepidation Bishop has does not appear to extend to the state Senate Appropriations Committee.

Chairman Jack Hill (R-Reidsville) also spoke to the Voices for Georgia's Children breakfast and said the federal stimulus money will be much needed.

"There's no doubt these federal funds are going to be good for Georgia and good for children," Hill said.